out of this Red Sea affair will try his capacity to the utmost. The more he is able to vindicate English interests exclusively by English authority, the better, we believe, he will consult the permanent welfare of the country. It is impossible to tell how much the future destiny of our Indian Empire may turn on the question whether or not the French Government shall be permitted to effect for itself an establishment on the shores of the Red Sea.

THE INDIA BILL IN THE LORDS.

THE Conservative Government of Lord DERBY has reduced the House of Lords to a condition of such impotence that it would be foolish to regard the India Bill as having passed under the jurisdiction of an independent assembly. It is true that, if the Upper House had not conclusively pledged itself to follow the dictates of the Lower, it might be considered as having considerable advantages in its discussion of the affairs of India. No hasty vote committed it at the beginning of the session to a policy which it did not understand and had no means of carrying out. It might, if it had thought fit to look on itself as really charged with a great authority, have fairly debated and decided whether a change in the home administration of India was necessary, whether it was opportune, and whether any measure submitted to Parliament proposed to create a form of Government which, substituted for present arrangements, had appreciable chances of practical success. But habits of acquiescence have now so firm a hold upon the House of Lords, that all these points must be regarded as finally adjudicated upon. The utmost which can be expected from the Upper House is a minor improvement here and there in provisions of minor importance. Debates under such circumstances possess little interest. The East India Company will have the honour of being eulogized by some, and of being vituperated by others, and the whole discussion will probably consist of variations on the themes of these opposing parties.

If the House of Lords cared to signalize itself by the wisdom of its amendments on the proposed measure, it would direct its attention to the clauses which give the SECRETARY of STATE the powers of the present Secret Committee. There is little presumption in asserting that the framers of this most dangerous provision are in ignorance of its purport and probable effect. At present, the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors is bound to obey the orders of the President of the Board of Control. But, though it must obey, there is no reason to believe that it obeys quite passively. It consists of the Chairman and Deputy-Chairman of the Company, who unite all threads of knowledge on the subject of India; and these officials are not likely to allow a talking politician to jeopardize the Empire without at least putting forth the whole strength of remonstrance. An ELLENBOROUGH may use their name to insult a CANNING; or a HOBHOUSE, at the bidding of a PALMERSTON, may render them helpless accomplices in an Affghan war; but there are doubtless Ministers more facile, or less feeble, who would hesitate wholly to disregard the advice of two experienced Indian statesmen. But the SECRETARY of STATE, under the new system, is to act by himself. He cannot consult his whole Council. He cannot without invidious distinction make a portion of it the depositary of his confidence; and, if he did, he would be deprived of that very material security which the existing system affords—the oath of secrecy. Accordingly, this clause of the new Bill has not only the effect of relieving the SECRETARY of STATE from control in the exercise of powers which experience proves to have been repeatedly employed with the most disastrous recklessness, but it absolutely throws difficulties in the way of his obtaining advice when he is modest enough to feel the want of it. It would surely be infinitely better that the undoubted inconvenience of confiding a State secret to fifteen gentlemen should be incurred, than that an exaggerated desire to obtain absolute secrecy should throw the reins on the neck of precipitation or incompetence. After all, is the danger that the Councillors of India should betray confidence so very imminent? Or, if they did, are we quite sure that the country would be much the worse for it? The Secret Committee can only be properly used for communications respecting peace, war, and diplomacy with native Princes. The days of diplomatic surprises are nearly over, even in Europe; and as for peace and war, there is no question respecting the possible outbreak of hostilities between our own country and a European Power which is not thoroughly ventilated by the press and in Parliament whole months before a critical stage is reached. It is only with reference to India that there exists this suspicious anxiety to forestall public opinion. It is only the secrets of Indian government which suffer, it appears, from being confided to fifteen experienced officials, whom half-a-dozen words would place on an honourable understanding as to secrecy. Here in England, a great determination as to war or peace must be communicated to Printing House-square at least a week before it is carried into effect, or woe to the Minister who conceals it. But, in India, Lord PALMERSTON insists that we must jealously guard the official practices which carefully hid from Leadenhall-street the fact that an army had marched to perish in Affghanistan, and which acquainted us that an expedition had landed at Persia by the same mail which brought the news that an unusual number of troops were assembling at Bombay.

Any well-conceived amendment of the provision as to the Secret Committee would have the advantage of enabling the House of Lords to dispense with the two clauses introduced by Mr. GLADSTONE. Any security against the follies of meddling Indian Ministers and Sultanized Governors-General is to be embraced, so long as Secretaries of State are armed with the powers of the Secret Committee; but Mr. GLADSTONE's clauses have the inconvenience of militating against a constitutional superstition, while the absence of any precedent as to the proper mode of obtaining the consent of Parliament to a declaration of war would probably tempt Governments to slip through the loophole which is furnished them by the permission to engage in hostilities on "any "urgent necessity." If the House of Lords relieved the authors of the Bill from the dilemma in which they are placed, between their unwillingness to create a form of control for every action of the Indian Minister, and their wish to neutralize the natural consequences of his unfettered independence, it would have rendered an essential service to Lord DERBY's Government. All that any Ministry can hope, in legislating for India, is to do as little harm as possible. The present Bill, thanks to the repentance of the House of Commons, is free from those staring blots which were forced on the attention of the country by the insolence and sciolism of Lord ELLENBOROUGH, by the recklessness and ignorance of Lord PALMERSTON, and by the ignorance and recklessness of Mr. VERNON SMITH. A few more improvements would render it a measure which has a tolerable chance of not irremediably disgracing the age and nation which produced it.

THE JEW BILL.

AFTER ten or eleven weary years, the great Jewish controversy is about to pass, perhaps for ever, into a state of suspended animation. The ingenious substitute for a capitulation, which was devised by Lord LUCAN, has carefully tied up, for the benefit of posterity, the inherited right of persecution or exclusion; and when a House of Commons for any reason cultivates intolerance, or a Jewish Lord CHANCELLOR receives a peerage from the Crown, the CHELMSFORDS and NEWDEGATES of future years may make a successful effort to re-Christianize an apostate Legislature. The principal losers by the interval of tolerance will probably be the Jews themselves, who may perhaps nearly have seen the last of Parliament. As long as every constituency can command a hundred candidates of their own blood and religious profession, there is no apparent reason for their making a choice in a community of alien extraction, endowed with several unpopular qualities. The City voters repeatedly returned Baron ROTHSCHILD, partly out of reverence for his wealth, but principally because the law had imposed an artificial restriction on their choice. When the first Jewish member of the House retires into private life, there is every reason to expect that his successor will be selected from the undistinguished multitude of professing Christians. No logical deduction from a constitutional principle was ever drawn into practice with less risk of any unforeseen or inconvenient result. The English character contains among its elements a fair proportion of bigotry, but the nation, in modern times at least, revolts against attempts to make it intolerant by legal compulsion. The prohibition which is now about to be withdrawn would have excited less agitation if it had been contained in some plain enactment, or in the ancient rules of the Common-law; but it was not to be endured that civil equality

should be disturbed through the mixed result of a quibble and a blunder. Of late years, orators have never attempted to copy Lord MACAULAY's glowing eulogy on the genius which belongs to the countrymen of Isaiah and the valour proper to the descendants of the Maccabees; or, if Mr. DISRAELI on one occasion boasted of the antique tenacity of his race, he also intimated his genuine indifference to the success of their constitutional pretensions. The increasing majorities of the House of Commons have been brought together by an indignant sense of absurdity, as much as by the necessity of finding a harmless vent for the liberalism which had been professed in general terms at the hustings. It was impossible to maintain for ever an enactment against the Jacobites which incidentally inflicted a disqualification on the Jews.

Lord JOHN RUSSELL has made up his mind to accept the compromise offered by the Lords, and he has accordingly taken charge of the Bill, but he intimates an amusing disappointment at the loss of an opportunity for creating inextricable confusion in the country. Notwithstanding the all but unanimous opinion of the lawyers in the House of Commons, Lord JOHN still holds to the belief that the Jews might have been admitted by resolution, even if the enabling Bill had not been introduced. In that case, the Courts of Law would have imposed statutable penalties without regard to an illegal encroachment, and the House of Commons would have retaliated by committing sheriffs and officers, even if the Lord Chief Justice had been exempt from a not unwelcome martyrdom. Such, says Lord JOHN RUSSELL, would have been the duty of the House, and he evidently regards with complacency the theory of two irreconcileable jurisdictions engaged in an interminable conflict. Fortunately, however, he remembers that times have changed since the Restoration and the Revolution, and that the country is no longer inclined to provide a security against oppression by confiding irresponsible power to a body which is already sufficiently strong. It is strange that an ex-Minister and professed constitutional authority should lay down the heretical doctrine that the House of Commons is the supreme power in the State. Political essayists are at liberty to pull the machine of Government to pieces for the purpose of examining the real working of its various parts, but responsible statesmen, in their public declarations, are bound to respect the legal doctrines of the constitution. The influence of the House of Commons scarcely admits of any limit, but it cannot procure a copy of the simplest public document without the formality of an address to the Crown; there is not a corporal in the army who would relieve guard five minutes too early at the unanimous bidding of the House; nor, with all its practical supremacy, can it, without statutable license, administer an oath to a witness at the bar. One of the principal securities of freedom consists in the separation which gradually grows up between the legal attributes of constituted authorities and their practical weight in public affairs. Lord JOHN RUSSELL's explanation that the right of withholding supplies is equivalent to sovereign control is a feeble excuse for an awkward blunder. The House of Lords is perfectly aware that it must evade serious conflict by timely concession, but it is useless to challenge resistance, or to boast of a superiority unknown to the constitution.

One of the oddest incidents in the recent proceedings consists in the string of reasons which were drawn up by the House of Lords to defend their conduct in rejecting the clauses of the Oaths Bill. It would have been at least decorous to leave the religious argument out of the dispute, when all parties had agreed that it was to be practically overruled. The majority of the Lords has just authorized the Commons to perpetrate the hollow mockery which, in their reasons, is zealously denounced; and yet it can scarcely be denied that the beadle who lends a known thief the key of the church is constructively guilty of the sacrilege which follows. Conscientious scruples are not unfrequently disregarded in political transactions, but when it is intended that they should not serve as motives or excuses for action, it is prudent to suppress considerations which make a compromise impossible. Lord DERBY himself was so far sensible of the absurdity that he disclaimed any participation in the doctrine that the presence of one or two unchristened representatives of a Christian people would deprive the ceremonial prayers of all their fitness and efficacy. The announcement that another Bill for the same purpose had already been passed would have supplied the best possible reason for declining to discuss the arguments of the Commons.

Tender consciences, shocked by the measure which will have unchristianized the House of Commons, may find some compensation in a curtailment of the verbal profanity which has hitherto been enforced by law. The oaths will be rendered less absurd by the omission of some obsolete clauses, and the Pretender's ghost will cease to walk, through the decision of the same Parliament which has exorcised his fellow shadows of the Gunpowder Plot, the blessed Restoration, and the glorious Revolution. Future generations will probably discover that there is no use in lowering the stile when the hedge in which it was inserted has been finally taken up. The various oaths were never meant for those who were willing to take them, but as a safeguard against conscientious recusants. As no class remains without the pale of the Constitution, it seems superfluous to maintain the ancient fence; but the whole matter possesses only a secondary importance, as few will be troubled by the restrictions of an oath when the *animus imponentis* is a sheet of blank paper. Members of Parliament promise nothing which they could refuse to perform if all promissory declarations were abolished, and there is no great harm in swearing to a purpose of going to bed at night and getting up in the morning. For some years to come it may be hoped that nothing more will be heard of oaths, or Jews, or of legislative interference with the political rights of all English subjects.

CHERBOURG.

THE five-and-thirty years which elapsed before 1851 were distinguished from any preceding period of general peace by the cordial and unsuspicious intercourse which, on the whole, prevailed among nations. For this honourable characteristic the period in question is indebted to the number of free Constitutions which existed in Europe. Every Government knew exactly when there was reason for alarm, and when there was excuse for security, simply because the affairs of the greatest commonwealths in Europe were always freely discussed in the face of day by their journals and Parliaments. The system of peaceful diplomacy which prevailed differed wholly from that which dishonoured the century preceding. When all the nations of the Continent except one or two insignificant Republics were controlled by hereditary despotisms, it was thoroughly understood that the profoundest sleep of peace might have a waking in war. FREDERIC the GREAT systematically plotted his attacks for the moment when his destined victims were lapped in security, and his enemies learned from him the grievous example. But the great pacification of 1815 endowed Europe with some great free States, whose mode of managing their policy put an end to such calamitous surprises. Kings had to feel the pulse of their subjects before they compromised them in the heaviest of all national misfortunes. During this process the whole brewing of the storm, from the cloud like a man's hand to the heaven black with clouds and wind, was open and visible to the civilized world. States had time to wrap themselves round with defences; the strength of each rival was clearly ascertained before the crisis; and the result always was that repentance came in time, and the sky of Europe again grew bright.

The re-establishment of despotism in France has thrown us back on the fears, jealousies, and suspicions of the eighteenth century. Once again we do not know what a cordial alliance means. The world has not the slightest idea what symptoms are menacing, and what are reassuring. The French journals are worthless for international purposes. The most delicate and considerate compliments, and the most acrimonious philippics, are alike valueless to the observer. One week of a free Parliament, one day of a free press, one hour's genuine audit of the Imperial budget, would set at rest almost every doubt which Englishmen feel; but short of this, they know that all inquiry into the designs of our neighbour must be the merest guesswork, and that worst of all guesswork which strives to penetrate the springs of action in a single human being. If we were merely engaged in a study of character, we might be at liberty to see much in the Emperor of the FRENCH that is reassuring. He does certainly seem to have carried with him from England some respect and regard for English idiosyncrasies. He appeared to enjoy the popularity which attended his visit to the QUEEN. And one may reasonably believe that his freedom from some of the ordinary weaknesses of his subjects opens his eyes to the fact that the long-enduring, long-remembering animosity of Great Britain is one of the most terrible dangers which a nation or a dynasty can call up. But then, it must be again and again repeated, he is the author of